

Old John Alden's Line

[From a Boston paper in the '80's]

That old piece of brick? Captain John Alden gave me that. He says it came out of the cellar of the house that the old original John and Priscilla Alden used to occupy. Captain John is a descendant of the man Priscilla proposed to and lives all alone in a house which they say was built in 1653. He is one of the most interesting men in the world. I was down to Duxbury a while ago with Wendell Hunt to see him.

Not five minutes from the Duxbury station on the south shore road and down the track a rough driveway climbs around grassy knoll. By the stone wall at the roadside a guide-post supports a rude sign. The sign says:

ALDEN AVENUE
House Built 1653

You go in with feelings of curiosity and awe mingled. You follow the track until another sign, this one nailed over the door of a back portico that the captain has built all by himself, says:

NOTICE

Admission
25¢

Perhaps the captain is interested enough to show you in without thinking about the quarter. If that is the case, of course you don't insist on paying and the first thing you know you are in the kitchen.

Captain John Alden is 74 now. His figure is of the medium height and stooped a little, but his frame is like the trunk of a live oak, and the thick white hair that covers the top of his head and circles carelessly under his cheeks and chin is like the moss that clings to it. His wife has been dead these 30 years and for five years now, since his mother was carried to the graveyard, the captain has dwelt in this old house with no company except a cat demure enough to suit half a dozen tidy old ladies. He enjoys it, this living as he chooses and has

More Callers To Talk To
than many of your swell entertainers.

But I was speaking of the kitchen.

en. Ordinarily a kitchen isn't attractive, but Captain Jack's is. There is small stove at one side, provided evidently with most of the utensils; and near it, fastened to the wall, is a semi-circular table, with just above, on a shelf and ready for immediate use, are knife and fork and salt cellar and pepperbox and all. The table is covered with the bottom of a canvas sea bag that the captain made on one of his voyages around the Horn, and the bottom he ornamented around the edges with some tape after his return. Leading off at the other side is the pantry, which the captain says he wouldn't be afraid to have the nicest housewife look into and inside that is an almost vain array of dishes, cups and saucers. The Bass ale bottles are empty and there are traces of a good appetite lying around among the cold meats.

The next room is sort of a landing at the foot of the stairs and is remarkable for a bottle of whale oil that hangs and has hung for nobody knows how many years, by the window, where it slowly evaporates. The captain does not know why he leaves it there and does not know why he does not take it down, but he does not touch it. However, at the head of the stairs is the captain's bed. He makes it himself and well made it is, but the wardrobes and the toilet facilities are probably not so extensive as in my ladies' chamber. A contrivance that Captain Jack has rigged has enabled him, while lying down, as it were, becalmed in the doldrums to draw the curtain without rising or hauling his sheet aft, and take the morning sun.

The large room adjoining has four windows and may be called for the want of a proper term, the guest chamber. The captain painted it all himself, as the stranger can readily imagine. The mural decorations consist almost entirely of old theatre bills. In the glare of the red and blue and black ink most of the popular successes, good or bad are represented,—"Dreams, or Fun in a Photograph Gallery"; "Storm Beaten"; "Siberia";—"Poor George"

Parks Used to Play in That—and "Shane-na-Lawn." Then Alice Harrison is faithfully portrayed as being in "Hot Water" and there was something posted about Thatcher, Primrose and West. By the old-fashioned mantle an ancient spinning wheel stands still.

"Mother gave away a couple of old reels in '76," said the Captain, "when we might have got \$10 or \$12 a piece for them."

The captain pointed out an old bureau that was as old as the oldest and then remarked that he had put some hay in under the coverlet of the bed, so that visitors would think he had accommodations for one or two more than he really had. On the way back to the sitting room he will point out if you don't notice them yourselves, some charts on the wall of his bedroom and a drafting that he could rig a ship by; a big lead sinker that serves as ballast for a curtain string and a couple of lamp burners, fixed in the wall of the pantry "For ventilation, see," the captain says.

In the main room on the ground floor you sit in chairs a hundred or two years old that Captain Alden himself has painted three or four times and listen to yarns that will interest you longer than you ought to stay. You can't help looking at the walls. You notice a picture of Colonel Briggs Alden who lived, a prim statley gentleman from the likeness, from 1723 to 1795, the great grandson of the old John and the great grandfather of this John before you. You notice a genealogical record, printed in typewriter and framed neatly, also hanging on the wall, and the captain won't object

If You Offer To Copy It,

I copied it—I don't know exactly why, but I did, and here it is:

St. Mark's Church
Mauch Chunk, Penn.

The Rectory, July 25, 1885

John Alden, Esq., Duxbury, Mass.:

Dear Sir—I have been able to trace your descent from John Alden of Mayflower notoriety, and find that you belong in the seventh generation, as follows:

First—John Alden married Priscilla Mullins, and had children named John, Joseph, Elizabeth, Jonathan, Sarah, Ruth, Mary, David.

Second—Jonathan married Abigail Hallet, and had children named Andrew, Jonathan, John, Benjamin.

ALDEN FAMILY